

Chapter 5

COMMUNICATION

Introduction

The recommendations in this chapter address EPA's communications processes. The Study suggests areas where more effective internal communication can improve Program efficiency and data collection important to Program reporting, and where enhancements to EPA's external communication can more accurately portray the Superfund Program's accomplishments and boost the Program's profile.

Background:

To successfully manage a complex environmental program with multiple sources of funding, managers and staff need easy access to information. Superfund managers need programmatic and management (finance, grants, contracts, etc.) reports. RPMs and OSCs need site-specific information, contract and IAG information, etc. All parts of the Program have a need for easy access to information that is presented in a way that is useful to them. Various tools are currently being used, enhanced, or developed within the Agency that can facilitate access to Program information. These tools should be shared across the Program to avoid duplicative efforts.

Congress and others outside the Agency have expressed concern that the Agency is not spending enough money on cleaning up Superfund sites. In its FY 2004 report, the Senate Appropriations Committee noted that the Agency was spending only 16 percent of the annual appropriation on site construction and LTRAs, and directed the Agency to spend no less than the 22 percent of the annual appropriation. When the Conference Committee completed its work on the Agency's 2004 budget, it did not direct the Agency to target a specific percentage of funding to site construction.

A concern within EPA is that expenditures for long-term cleanups and LTRAs do not represent all of the funding being spent on cleanups. The percentage referenced by the Senate Appropriations Committee understates the true amount invested in cleanup because it only represents the money going to contractors and other federal agencies. More importantly, it does not include other key activities that are speeding up all long-term cleanups at Superfund sites.

EPA needs to more accurately report the amount of funding it invests each year related to long-term cleanups, which means the Agency needs to revise how it collects (internally) and reports (externally) cleanup data.

Over 70 percent of Superfund cleanups are currently performed by PRPs as a result of the Agency's vigorous enforcement program. The costs of the enforcement program typically are not included as part of the cost of cleanups.

In the end, the more accurate portrayal of cleanup costs will help the Agency better showcase its cleanup accomplishments, and to respond to Congressional inquiries regarding appropriations vs. spending.

EPA also needs to ensure it is collecting and reporting information on cleanup activity at SASs, which, like the cleanup cost reporting, will more accurately portray the totality of EPA's cleanup efforts and accomplishments.

Finally, it is important that EPA improve its coordination with IAGs with other federal agencies, especially the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Regular communication among EPA and other federal agencies will help ensure optimum performance and results in shared programmatic activities.

Recommendations and Actions:

Recommendation 13: Effectively Communicate Cleanup Costs. The Agency should collect data at the end of the budget year on the amount of funds spent on direct cleanup or on those activities that are necessary to get to the cleanup phase and communicate the cost of cleanups more effectively.

Action: No additional action will be taken as this is an ongoing effort and the information is reported out on a regular basis. *(OSRTI)*

Recommendation 27: Effectively Communicate All Cleanup Accomplishments. OSWER and the lead Region should work together to ensure all site cleanup work (including work completed under the SAS program) is tracked and reported internally and externally to ensure accomplishments of the national Program are appropriately communicated to the public and Congress.

Action: This activity is already part of EPA's procedures. This is part of GPRA reporting; the SPIM includes SASs in all appropriate reporting categories. OSRTI will verify the functioning of CERCLIS for FY 2004 accomplishments. No additional action will be taken against this recommendation. *(OSRTI)*

Recommendation 90: Prepare Monthly SSC Reports. OSWER and OCFO, if needed, should work together to establish monthly reports that staff and managers can use to better track SSC collections, obligations, and expenditures.

Action: This recommendation has already been accomplished. OSRTI works with OCFO to ensure that the Regions receive ongoing regular reports on SSC balances to help them manage these accounts. *(OSRTI)*

Recommendation 94: Establish Regular Cross-Agency Meetings. The Regions should continue or should reestablish regular meetings between Regional senior managers and their

counterparts [in the U.S. Corps of Engineers, although applicable to IAGs with all federal agencies] to discuss project milestones, deliverables status, and opportunities to minimize cost growth.

Action: This is a low priority because it is already being done to varying degrees in the Regions. This is currently being coordinated in the Regions. *(Lead Region)*

Recommendation 98: Provide Information About New Agency Systems. OARM and OCFO should work with Senior Resource Officials to communicate the development and deployment status of new Agency-wide systems (financial management, grants and IAG management).

Action: There is an on-going effort to address this recommendation. A new Agency-wide Contract Management System is critical to the optimization of Superfund dollars through the facilitation of end-to-end financial management. OAM has three alternatives being assessed. OAM is continuing the effort to obtain funding and approval for an acquisition system. A draft Capital Planning and Investment Control proposal will be submitted in 2005. *(OARM/OAM)*

Recommendation 99: Provide Information About Current Agency Systems. OSWER and the Regions should evaluate which systems and tools currently exist or are under construction and should circulate this information in order to avoid duplication of data systems and tools.

Action: OSRE will continue to act as a liaison for the Superfund enforcement data that exists in CERCLIS (OSWER) and ICIS (OECA). OSRE routinely works with the Office of Compliance on system development and enhancement to avoid duplication and inconsistencies between the two data systems, where practicable. *(OECA)*